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Message Text

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12
ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

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R 190838 Z MAY 73
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9292
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 4107

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PK, IN BG
SUBJ: GOP' S CURRENT NEGOTIATING POSITION.

REF: ISLAMABAD 4049, 4018, STATE 93487

SUMMARY
PAKS SERIOUSLY INTENT ON REOPENING DIALOGUE AIMED AT RESOLVING MAJOR SUB- CONTINENT ISSUES. PRIMARY OBJECTIVE REMAINS RETURN OF POWS. SPECIFICALLY, GOP WISHES FOLLOW- UP ON APRIL 17 DELHI DECLARATION, ALTHOUGH ADMITTEDLY SOME OF ITS PUBLIC TACTICS HAVE NOT BEEN HELPFUL. END SUMMARY

1. CURRENT GOP VIEW OF STATE OF PLAY IN SUBCONTINENT AND OUTLINE OF PRESENT GOP NEGOTIATING TACTICS LARGELY SPELLED OUT IN EMB REFTELS.

2. WHILE APRIL 27 INDIA/ BANGLADESH DECLARATION SUBSTANTIALLY CHANGED GROUND RULES FOR NEGOTIATIONS, PAKISTAN' S OBJECTIVES HAVE REMAINED CONSTANT. FIRST
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AND FOREMOST GOP WNATS POWS BACK. THEY SEEM HAVE EXCELLENT HUMANITARIAN AND LEGAL CASE ON POWS. RECURRENT INDIAN SPECULATION THAT BHUTTO, FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER, WOULD REALLY PREFER TO DEALY THEIR REPATRIATION IN OUR VIEW IS COMPLETELY UNFOUNDED. ON OTHER HAND, BHUTTO HAS BEEN SURPRISINGLY SUCCESSFUL IN CONTAINING DOMESTIC PRESSURES ON THIS ISSUE AND IN KEEPING PAKISTANI RESENTMENT OVER POWS FOCUSED ON INDIA RATHER THAN HIS GOVERNMENT. HE THUS HAS ELBOW ROOM TO NEGOTIATE FOR THEIR RETURN ON TERMS LEAST UNFAVORABLE TO APKISTAN.

3. GOP JS REMAINING TWO MAJOR OBJECTIVES CONTINUE TO BE (A) TO BLOCK WAR CRIMES TRIALS ENTIRELY IF POSSIBLE, OR AT LEAST TO HEAD OFF GENOCIDE- TYPE TRIALS IN WHICH GOP POLICY RATHER THAN INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS WOULD BE THE ACTUAL DEFENDENT; AND (B) TO MAINTAIN CONTROLLING VOICE IN DETERMING NUMBER AND IDENTITY OF BIHARIS TO BE PERMITTED MIGRATE FROM BANGLADESH TO PAKISTAN.

4. IN PURSUIT THESE OBJECTIVES, GOP HAS BEEN FOLLOWING COMPLICATED -- PERHAPS TOO COMPLICATED -- SET OF TACTICS INVOLVING DISTINCT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE POUCURES TOGETHER WITH SERIOS OF SIGNALS WHICH INDIANS ARE SUPPOSED TO GRASP. PUBLICLY GOP HAS TAKEN, WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, GENERALLY HARD LINE IN RESPONSE TO APRIL 17 DECLARATION, CULMINATING IN UNFORTUNATE MAY 11 STATEMENT LABELING IT " PROPAGANDA PLOY " . PRIVATELY GOP HAS ASSURED US AUTHORITATIVELY AND AT VARIETY OF LEVELS THAT IT CONSIDERS DECLARATION A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD AND A BASIS FOR RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS. PAK HAVE BEEN DISMAYED BY GOI FONMIN' S REJECTION OF REQUEST TO SEND REP TO ISLAMABAD FOR TALKS, EXCEPT IF GOP ACCEPTS BEFOREHAND ALL INDIA/ BANGLDESH DEMANDS.

5. PROBLEM AS WE SEE IT FROM HERE IS THAT BOTH SIDES WANT START TALKING BUT EACH DEEPLY MISTRUSTS THE OTHER AND IS UNWILLING TO GIVE OTHER SIDE PRESUMED ADVANTAGE BY ACCEPTING ITS STIPULATIONS FOR TALKS. THUS SWARAN SINGH ATTEMPTS INDUCE PAKS TO AGREE ON " PRINCIPLE" OF THREE-WAY POW- BENGALEE- BIHARI SWITCH PLUS
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ACQUIESCENCE IN WAR CRIMES TRIALS AS PRECONDITION FOR TALKS, WHILE GOP INSISTS PUBLICLY THAT TALKS CAN BE ONLY ABOUT POW RETURN ALTHOUGH IT PRIVATELY AGREES TO DISCUSS " RELATED TOPICS". PROBLEM FURTHER COMPLICATED BY FACT THAT GOP, ALTHOUGH RECOGNIZING DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOI AND BANGLADESH POSITIONS AND EVEN EXPRESSING SOME PRIVATE SYMPATHY FOR INDIA' S DISCOMFIT AS MIDDLE- MAN, CANNOT

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REALLY CONVINCE ITSELF THAT GOI COULD NOT BRING BANGLADESH AROUND TO MORE REASONABLE STANCE IF IT TRIED.

6. NO DOUBT THAT PUBLIC POSTURING OF ALL THREE PARTIES MAKES DIFFICULT SITUATION EVEN MORE DIFFICULT, BUT THIS IS FACT OF LIFE IN SUBCONTINENT AFFAIRS. PARTIES HAVE SO FAR CONTINUED THEIR EXCHANGES OVER APRIL 17 DECLARATION DESPITE PUBLIC DENUNCIATIONS. WE VENTURE PREDICT THAT IN DUE COURSE, AFTER FURTHER MANEUVERING, NEGOTIATIONS ON ACTUAL SUBSTANCE OF APRIL 17 OFFER WILL BEGIN. BUT PROCESS IS LIKELY TO BE A SLOW ONE AT BEST, AND COULD BE SHELVED FOR EXTENDED PERIOD IF BDG GOES AHEAD WITH WAR CRIMES TRIALS THIS MONTH.

7 . RECOGNIZING THERE IS LITTLE OUTSIDERS CAN DO TO HELP REACTIVATE NEGOTIATING PROCESS, WE BELIEVE WE MAY HAVE SOME OCCASIONS TO BE MARGINALLY HELPFUL. FOR EXAMPLE WE BELIEVE IT WAS USEFUL FOR DEPSEC AND SISCO RECENTLY TO HAVE TOLD INDIAN/ BANGLADESH REPS OF THEIR IMPRESSION -- WHICH WE SHARE FULLY -- THAT GOP SAW POSITIVE OPENING IN DELHI DECLARATION OF APRIL 17 AND WISHES IN FACT TO WORK OUT SOME MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION OF VARIOUS ISSUES MENTIONED IN THAT DECLARATION. AS FOR OURSELVES HERE, WE HAVE TRIED TO BE HONEST AND FRANK IN COMMENTING ON GOP POSITIONS WHEN SUBJECT HAS ARISEN IN DISCUSSIONS WITH PAKS, AND ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO ILLUSIONS ON HOW MUCH WE MAY HAVE DONE, WE DO NOT THINK OUR COMMENTS HAVE BEEN UNHELFUL.
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